

**Remarks**  
**DCM Sandra Clark**  
**Reception for visiting Sports Envoys**  
**Ebbets Field Friday, April 29**

*(As prepared)*

Asalamu Alekum!

Mr. Cabinet Director Minister of Sports

Ms. Protocol Head representing Minister of Women, Family, and Children

Mr. President of Senegalese Football Federation

Madame President of Women's Soccer Commission

Visiting Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Dear guests

I am delighted to welcome Staci Wilson and Zola Solamente, our Soccer Envoys from the United States. Both Staci and Zola had long careers as both coaches and players, and have demonstrated professionalism and dedication to the game we all love both on and off the field.

Senegal has a rich tradition of soccer. Soccer fields around Dakar are busy day and night with teams practicing or neighborhood kids playing a pickup game. Visit any village and you will see children kicking a ball towards makeshift goal posts.

Yet despite its popularity, many young women in Senegal who want to play soccer face obstacles. Statistics show that girls who play sports are more likely to get better grades in school and more likely to graduate than girls who do not play sports. Not only is it healthier to stay active, but female athletes also learn important lessons about leadership ability and self-confidence, which lead to success off the field. To the women of Senegal, I would like to say, "You can play. You SHOULD play."

We are joined today by two courageous teams from the Senegalese women's soccer league "Ladies' Turn." We're proud to partner with them again, and they will play an exhibition match shortly.

And while we are here to celebrate soccer, I also want to encourage all of our young athletes to pursue their other passions as well. As our two envoys clearly demonstrate, success in the life depends on getting an education which can support you after you take your cleats off. Both Staci and Zola are proud graduates from the University of North Carolina. Staci made a career for herself coaching and Zola has followed a different passion into the arts. Finding what you love to do beyond sports is critical to future success.

Dieureudieuf!